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ABSTRACT

This report describes partnerships in continuing education in England and analyzes some of the issues involved in such partnerships. The report suggests ways in which collaboration might be increased in the interests of existing and potential users. In Part I, Chapters 1-3 introduce the concept of educational partnership, provide definitions, and outline some of the issues involved in cooperation versus competition in education. Chapters 4 and 5 (Part II) consist of case studies of four very different attempts at collaboration. Part III contains three chapters that discuss the meaning of partnership and the arguments for collaboration, which are compelling, but must contend with deep-seated drives for competition. Chapter 8 also outlines some general principles for partnership. A 53-item bibliography is followed by a list of people consulted for this report. (KC)

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Partnership in Continuing Education

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FURTHER EDUCATION UNIT

PARTNERSHIP IN CONTINUING EDUCATION

A review of the issues

R J MacKenzie

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RP371

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Bob MacKenzie

FOREWORD

This FEU project set out to look at interesting examples of partnership between adult and further education. It was a relatively brief project, intended to provide stimulus to debate rather than draw firm conclusions.

NIACE, as well as the FEU, was involved in monitoring the project. The collaboration gives rise to this joint foreword.

The project, though modest in its aims, covered interesting ground for those concerned with the education of adults in 'adult education' and 'further education' settings. Its conclusions are by no means final and we hope, as stated, that it will give rise to further debate and study, as well as stimulating policy and institutional development.

A number of studies have highlighted the need for a comprehensive curriculum for adults and have drawn attention to the dispersal and lack of consistency of educational provision for adults among a variety of institutions. In some cases, institutions vie with each other for the same clients, provision is duplicated and resources are wasted. In extreme cases, classes in neighbouring institutions are closed which, if aggregated, would be viable. Such waste underlines the value of partnership.

Although partnership is not always appropriate, the report indicates a number of forms this can take, including some which carefully preserve the integrity of the partner institutions. Takeovers disguised as mergers are rightly to be feared by junior partners. It is the senior partner who is likely to assert that problems will be removed by this process.

Productive examples of partnership in which interests are protected are explored in the report. Some concessions are inevitably made, however, and though the formal 'contract' suggested on page 8 may be thought to be going too far, the notion of 'shared meaning' (page 53) may be instructive here.

Suggestions about the way forward, as well as dealing with institutional issues, touch on national policy. There is evidence that, a few years ago, the DES considered rationalising its administration of adult and further education. It is noted in the report that separation of AE/FE responsibilities between two branches of the department is not conducive to joint approaches. Similarly, local authority officer structures often separate such responsibilities with the result that partnership issues are not high on the agenda. Nevertheless, we recognise the importance of the different traditions, the need for different types of institutions (for example the community primary school in rural sites distant

from major institutions), and the contrasting strengths of the main types of institutions.

We formally commend the report to you in the hope that adult and further education can work together towards good and productive partnerships and that sensible policy and institutional development can ensue from a lively debate and further study.

Geoff Stanton
Chief Officer
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Arthur Stock
Formerly Director
National Institute of
Adult Continuing
Education

SUMMARY

'Partnership in Continuing Education' (FEU project RP371) set out to address the issues inherent in the rhetoric on collaboration and competition which exists in much education provision for adults. This report attempts to suggest ways in which collaboration might be increased in the interests of existing and potential users. Given the constraints upon the system, the variety and complexity of institutional arrangements, and the changes currently taking place within society, sustained efforts at collaboration have tended to receive low priority in terms of staff time and resources - yet the case for collaboration can be compelling.

Chapters 3 and 6 discuss what is involved in 'partnership', and suggest factors which encourage or inhibit this arrangement. The importance of negotiations leading to a 'shared meaning' between potential partners, to clarify the nature of the 'contract' between them, is discussed on page 8. Chapters 4 and 5 consist of case studies of four very different attempts at collaboration.

The conclusion arrived at in Chapters 7 and 8 is that the arguments for collaboration are compelling, but are in contention with deep-seated drives towards competition and resistance to co-ordination. Collaboration needs time and understanding: it is a process which needs nurturing. Potential collaborators often need to engage in projects which will help them to learn how best to work together. By creating conditions that encourage educational institutions to explore the common ground that lies between them, local authorities and senior staff in the establishments concerned can do much to foster the development of a 'shared meaning'. This, in turn, will enable the growth of trust which will encourage greater collaboration in the interests of adults who wish to make use of the education services on offer.

Four examples were chosen for the field-work upon which this report is based. Each example represents a different type of collaboration, and some attempt was made to include a spread of geographical, social and organisational settings. Towards the end of the field-work there was an important 'reflecting-back' period, during which key members of participating institutions had the opportunity to comment on the project worker's perceptions - a stage indicative of the instrumental dimension of the project. Based upon this procedure, this report seeks to suggest the practical and philosophical arguments for collaboration, to promote an exploratory, participatory and agenda-setting process, and to interpret and disseminate the experience derived from the four main case studies.

The report is addressed in particular to potential partners in statutory adult and

further education, although others, including voluntary agencies, may find much of interest in it.

Postscript

Every attempt has been made to respect the wishes of the local authorities which generally allowed us to use examples of partnership in their areas as case studies. All have agreed to publication, though in some cases minor amendments were requested. Inevitably, however, the passage of time during the writing, editing and publication stages has made the observations on particular institutions and local authorities appear, to them, to be dated. The FEU recognises this, and that good practice in partnership is developing rapidly. A response from one LEA, received just before publication notes that 'We welcome this report for the enduring value of its analysis of partnership. A variety of organisational arrangements for the delivery of continuing education can be made to work, what is feasible in a particular place being largely dictated by its own history. It is, however, a field which will continue to be characterised by a plurality of activity. The report identifies issues which must be addressed if these activities are to be effectively related to one another in a way which allows for improved choice, effective use of resources and a balanced curriculum. The key to this being achieved is surely the development and monitoring of policies for continuing education by the LEA.'

The FEU accepts this, but hopes that the issues relating to partnership, highlighted in this study, will nevertheless be of value to local authorities and institutions making plans, for example, for provision for the Employment Training scheme. Note should be made also of the Unit for the Development of Adult Continuing Education (UDACE) initiatives in voluntary/statutory partnerships which have been undertaken and have led to two publications:

— *Understanding Each Other - Voluntary/Statutory Relationships in the Education of Adults* UDACE, 1987

— *Working Together - Developing Voluntary/Statutory Collaboration - the Policy Paper* UDACE, 1988.

PART I

SETTING THE SCENE

1. INTRODUCTION

Background

This report argues that the development of partnerships in key areas of the education of adults is an urgent priority for many providers. This is not a new discovery. A National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE) paper on community education and colleges suggested, several years ago, that 'partnership in programmes will be an established norm' (NATFHE, 1981, p. 5). More recently, an FEU discussion paper, *Supporting Adult Learning* (1987), referred to the social, economic and technological changes that require appropriate response from educational institutions. It envisaged a kind of curriculum-led partnership in which the adoption of 'a comprehensive curriculum design will provide a more rational basis for the overall allocation of resources and opportunities for access' (op.cit. p.15).

The present climate of change has led many adult education institutions and further education colleges to reconsider the nature of their relationship with each other. Traditional distinctions between vocational and non-vocational education are seen as increasingly artificial and outmoded. The Adult Training Strategy of the Manpower Services Commission (now the Training Agency) has had some influence in this process. By using its purchasing power in approving development plans for work-related non-advanced further education (WRNAFE) it has led, in some cases, to comprehensive planning by LEAs, including provision for continuing education. LEAs are feeling under threat from this and other sources, and may believe that greater attention to consistency and collaborative planning in their educational provision might offer a better chance of confident development.

Such planning by LEAs may take account of the fact that a balanced curriculum cannot always be delivered by a single type of institution. There are recent instances of attempts to create a more collaborative approach from a team of institutions (see Flude, 1986). These initiatives may operate at different levels – from within national bodies like the FEU and NIACE or at the local level. This report attempts to consider the factors involved in partnerships in continuing education.

Context of the report

The report aims to describe and appraise relevant issues and interesting examples of linkages between adult education and further education services in the development of provision for the education of adults. Experience suggests that it is not always clear to practitioners what partnership entails or how and when it is best achieved. To help clarify such issues, a preliminary study was undertaken of a small range of collaboration models being tried in the field.

In relation to unemployed adults, Watts and Knasel have argued, in *Adult Unemployment and the Curriculum* (FEU, 1985, para. 51), that few institutions on their own are capable of developing the required degree of comprehensiveness for a suitable curriculum. Moreover, as a result of special initiatives such as REPLAN, Education Support Grants and Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit (ALBSU) projects, various forms of linkages have been entered into by further education colleges and adult education institutions in order to try to improve and co-ordinate their services. Often, there are sound practical reasons for a more collective approach to encourage the best use of resources. Certain combinations of factors are assumed to be favourable to such closer institutional relationships, including geographical location, co-operative management arrangements, cross-membership on governing and management bodies, positive local authority policies, and clear guidelines on respective roles and responsibilities.

Supporting Adult Learning (FEU, 1987) stressed the need for a broader approach than hitherto to curriculum planning and provision for part-time adult students, and noted that:

> 'Present provision of learning opportunities
> for adults comprises a most extraordinary
> hotchpotch of inconsistencies and anomalies.'

One complication is the variety and complexity of institutional arrangements. Adult curricula are delivered through a range of differing institutions and models including: tertiary colleges; community schools; community colleges; free-standing adult, youth and community education institutes; further education colleges with departments responsible for the education of adults; directly organised by LEA officers rather than institutions; a growing number of private providers; open learning systems such as The Open College. Where increasing numbers of adults are seeking education or training for work or leisure, the question arises as to whether the existing LEA adult and further education services – either separately or in some kind of partnership – are capable of meeting that demand.

The most common type of further education student was most likely to be someone in the 16-19 year age group, though adults have always been an important component group and are increasingly so. In this report, older students are included in this definition, as are students who may not fit easily into a clear category. They may be attending for non-traditional purposes such as pre-vocational courses, government-sponsored schemes, special needs classes, etc. In authorities where there are more cases of this 'new' type of student, or they are anticipated, both further education colleges and adult education institutions in the catchment area are having to consider or implement fresh patterns of internal and external arrangements, and to reassess their ideas about the most appropriate service that, separately or jointly, each should aim to offer.

The problems of competition

The case for collaboration is reinforced by problems arising from competition – overt or unacknowledged – between different providers. 'Competition for students or areas of work is likely to produce confusion to the disadvantage of students and providers alike' (AACE, 1980, p.2). No single type of institution has a monopoly of expertise, resources or territory: 'Inter-agency co-operation is essential to avoid accusations of a centre "take-over" of central community functions' (ibid. p.3).

Much of this competition doubtless stems from the climate of uncertainty and insecurity with which students and providers currently have to cope. Further education colleges are having to compete with private providers, in some cases for the first time.

The case for collaboration

Time and resources devoted to promoting partnership or collaboration may seem, initially, to be unnecessary and unaffordable luxuries when other more potent factors are imposing change upon the post-16 education sector. For example, following a general expansion of services in the early 1970s, reduced public expenditure has hit hard. Unemployment and central government initiatives through agencies such as the MSC (now the Training Agency) have significantly influenced the nature of further education provision. But this report contends that, unless issues of partnership and collaboration are addressed, competition, wastefulness and confusion are likely to increase.

Faced with the prospect of a merger or tertiary reorganisation, adult education institutions are generally anxious about the consequences for their service and seek safeguards and models and to ensure that the best of their work is not lost or ignored. Helpful models of positive collaboration in practice are difficult to identify, especially as they are rarely seen to apply simultaneously at both national and local levels.

At the local level, collaboration is attempted by practitioners seeking to discharge statutory or community obligations, who are aware of the seriousness of the threat from other government agencies and from the growing private sector, and who are aware of a series of reports urging action in this direction. On behalf of advice agencies, the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux (NACAB) produced a discussion paper that usefully argued the case for closer collaboration. It identified three compelling sets of reasons for this between agencies concerned with:

— complementary service delivery to clients;
— identification of gaps in service delivery through comprehensive planning;
— approaches to funders, with general support from other key providers (NACAB, 1982, pp.1-2).

The Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AACE) was quite clear that, in developing collaboration, further education colleges have an important role to play:

> 'The development of relationships with other providers, based on co-operation, referral and support rather than fear of competition, will provide the context in which further education colleges should develop their role as area resources for supporting adult education.'
>
> (AACE, no date, p.4)

2. SOME WORKING DEFINITIONS

It is always difficult to secure agreement on formulae or definitions relevant to the education of adults (see Legge, 1982, pp. 1,9). The terms 'community' and 'curriculum' are only two examples of terms which are frequently used but variously understood. However, since the current economic and political climate engenders frequent talk of rationalisation, greater clarity and focus are needed to ensure the greater confidence and effectiveness of practitioners. Certain terms are used repeatedly in this discussion, and it is therefore necessary to indicate the meanings intended here.

Partnership

Where services are seeking to be complementary rather than competitive, partnership is sometimes considered as an option. In general, there are several forms of partnership which vary in degrees of formality and duration. There are also different kinds of partners – commonly senior, junior and 'sleeping' – who are not necessarily of equal status and perform different functions. Strictly, partnership involves a formal contractual arrangement between certain parties to achieve a common purpose. An agreement is reached on respective roles, the sharing of risks and profit and, often, specific safeguards, obligations and penalties. Partnerships generally result from a preliminary period of negotiation.

More directly related to the education of adults, a form of partnership was envisaged by the *Russell Report* (DES, 1973) in the form of Local Development Councils (LDCs). The difficulties encountered in setting up LDCs have been detailed (see Legge, 1982, pp. 193-5). More recently, three different kinds of looser educational collaboration were identified (Watts and Knasel, 1985, p. 23). These are communication, co-operation and co-ordination. The first two, in particular, have connotations of voluntary linkages, liaison and networking. Watts and Knasel suggest the following definitions, which have been taken as the basis for this discussion (Watts and Knasel, 1985, p.23):

Communication

Where institutions and agencies retain their individual programmes and modes of work, but efforts are made to arrive at a better understanding of each other.

Co-operation

Where institutions and agencies collaborate on a joint project or task.

Co-ordination

Where institutions and agencies alter their established working patterns to provide a programme on an integrated basis.

Clearly, co-ordination is often a tighter form of arrangement. The co-ordinator must usually be in a position to make certain demands upon participants as a matter of course.

Merger

A merger is the result of two or more parties or organisations fusing into one. Each brings certain qualities and resources to this new arrangement. Mergers are often contentious as they carry connotations of threat or danger and conjure up the image of an aggressive, dominant party swallowing up less powerful competitors (Handy, 1985, pp. 197, 203). When the question of collaboration between further education colleges and adult education institutions is raised, it is the merger which is generally most visualised and feared by the latter, especially when an integrated service is being mooted. In fact, collaboration is not necessarily synonymous with a merger, although it is the merger model which is most frequently feared by smaller institutions. Other terms commonly associated with mergers are integration, amalgamation and incorporation.

Further education

The Robbins Report (Committee on Higher Education, p. 317, para 1.3) defined further education as comprising all institutions (other than universities, the then colleges of education, and those that fall within adult education) which provide post-school education within the sphere of responsibility of the Secretary of State for Education and Science. However, a substantial 'overlap' between various sectors of our education system has been evident for some time (see Cantor and Roberts, 1983, p. 1) and the legal basis of further education seems so far to have defied attempts at exact clarification (DES, 1981, p. 1).

Adult education

Adult education was defined by *The Robbins Report* as being mainly non-vocational in nature and provided by residential colleges (receiving direct grants from central government), and courses provided either separately or jointly by university extra-mural departments, the Workers' Educational Association, and other voluntary bodies (*The Robbins Report*, p. 317, para 1.5).

Since *The Robbins Report*, a great deal has changed and many adult educators would now see themselves as involved in provision that also has a strong vocational dimension.

The role and status of adult education are in a state of some flux and confusion. A DES discussion paper made the following observation:

> 'The term "adult education" is not used in the education statutes but is regarded as an integral part of further education as defined in section 41 of

the (1944 Education) Act. Paragraphs (a) and (b) of that section attempt to categorise further education as either leisure time occupation or full-time and part-time education; but further education as it has developed since 1944, has become a continuous and changing spectrum of provision for which such a categorisation is both inadequate and inappropriate. Moreover, LEAs' powers to provide recreational adult education together with facilities for recreational and social and physical training are likely to overlap or even conflict with other powers – both of the same authorities in the exercise of functions other than those of education and of local authorities other than LEAs. The definition of responsibilities in these areas need to be clarified.' (DES, 1981, p. 10)

Continuing education

Continuing education presupposes the prior experience of an initial education, and often has implications of retraining. It is associated with the concept of lifelong learning and with the vision of a coherent, unified national educational system and philosophy. As with the term adult education the DES group considering new legislation felt that no special mention should be made of continuing education because the term was imprecise and acceptance of a commonly agreed definition was unlikely (DES, 1981, p. 22).

The education of adults

With the greater blurring of distinctions between 'vocational' and 'non-vocational' education, and between adult and further education, and the difficulty of defining adult education 'the education of adults' is a term often used as a compromise (see Chadwick, 1984b, pp.vii – viii). As it stands, 'the education of adults' stresses the importance of education for adults, the concept of education as a lifelong process, and a wide repertoire of learning experiences in addition to formal teaching. But it is usually easier to agree about the meaning of the education of adults in general rather than specific terms.

Good practice in partnership

Here, good practice refers to the most appropriate arrangements made within or between LEA educational providers to work together towards shared objectives. Good practice differs according to circumstances, and a number of variations and permutations consequently occur. Different and often competing criteria for specifying good practice have been identified and, again, general statements tend to gain more ready acceptance than specific descriptions.

Curriculum

Curriculum might be taken to mean 'the whole teaching-learning activity which relates policy decisions to practice' (Chadwick, 1984 a, p. 52). In practice it can

refer to anything from programme content to the total programme of an educational institution.

Contract

In the course of working on this report, the author became increasingly aware of the importance of potential 'partners' having a clear and agreed understanding between them. The term 'contract' is not used here in a legal sense, but rather as an established concept found in business, some aspects of medicine, and social work. Contracts are used to generate faith and trust amongst the parties involved, and aim to enhance participation and the consequent easing of anxiety by setting out ground rules that are commonly accepted. The process of preliminary negotiation is particularly important.

When partnership is being considered, it is necessary to 'clear expectations' at the initial stages. Individual members of a group or consortium are unlikely to come together for the first time with common expectations. Hence there is a need to establish a more explicit working contract as a basis for proceeding.

The *Shorter Oxford Dictionary* defines 'contract' in the following way:

noun- 'mutual agreement between two or more parties that something shall be done or foreborne by one or both – also a writing in which the terms of a bargain are included – an agreement enforceable by law'

verb- 'to agree upon, to establish by agreement – to undertake mutually or enter upon – to become involved in – to draw the parts together – collect – concentrate.'

Tom Douglas, in his book *Groupwork Practice*, uses the term in its non-legal sense, in a form that can be either written or oral. A specific time limit on a contract is usually stated or implied, and such a contract also becomes renegotiable whenever any of the parties considers its terms unfair, harmful or redundant. The contract must also be realistic and recognise the existence of powerful external forces that can, with the best will in the world, influence the way in which potential 'partners' are able to relate to each other in practice (see Douglas, 1976, pp. 33-4, 59, 65-6).

Conclusion

The necessity for a closer rapprochement between adult and further education was a central argument in the DES discussion paper on the legal basis of further education. An unequivocal observation was that it is:

'...clearly necessary to redefine further education in statute in such a way as to include the full spectrum of adult and continuing education, and to obviate unrealistic distinctions between the vocational and general educational aspect. In addition, if the option of a duty rather than a power post-19 years (*sic*) is accepted, the redefinition should lay the same degree of duty on LEAs to provide for all FE, regardless of its contents and aim, or the age of the student.'

(DES, 1981, pp. 22-23).

3. ISSUES INVOLVED IN 'PARTNERSHIP'

In the last few years, many LEAs have undertaken a series of reviews and reorganisations in a variety of contexts such as adult education, community education, or tertiary bodies. The motives have been both pragmatic and philosophical. Such rationalisation is prompted by twin desires – on the one hand, to take into account contemporary social, economic, demographic and political trends and, on the other, to provide a more co-ordinated, comprehensive educational system available to, and suitable for, people over school-leaving age. The increasing role of the MSC (now the Training Agency) in the local training sector has also led providers to look at ways of working with each other more closely. WRNAFE reviews provide the starting-point for a consideration of the complete range of further education services. Thus there has been a proliferation of plans to restructure adult education services. This is often indicative of a search for a firmer organisational, financial and philosophical base. Assuming that linkage is called for, the main patterns normally take the form of some kind of realignment between the adult (and sometimes youth) service and one of two major groups of organisations which occupy a central place in the LEA decision-making apparatus, namely further education colleges or schools. Practitioners differ over which, if any, would be the more suitable alignment.

Given this lack of agreement and a tendency to equate partnerships with eventual mergers, it is not surprising that talk of partnership raises many spectres. Partnership is possible in many different forms, some more absolute and tightly defined than others. It is not the purpose of this report to advocate one particular form, nor indeed would this be advisable – different local circumstances require different responses. It is, however, assumed that, in principle, partnership in the education of adults can be a good thing and worth promoting wherever possible. On the other hand, partnership is not automatically the most suitable arrangement, and perceptions of each other, whether right or wrong, as well as the level of available resources, exert a powerful influence on how far potential partners are prepared to work together.

In this report, the principal partners are taken to be further education colleges and LEA adult education services. This, of course, is a limited definition as it does not consider at length the possibilities of other forms of partnership, such as those between similar kinds of educational organisations or between educational providers other than those for whom LEAs have statutory responsibility or which contain the term 'adult' in their title. At some stage, it will be necessary to extend this narrow concept of partnership to take into account these other forms, especially community schools and colleges. However, the issues raised in this preliminary review should serve as a useful beginning.

Alongside the rhetoric of collaboration can be traced another tradition – that of competition between educational agencies concerned with provision for adults. Hence a hard-headed view might be one voiced by a principal of an adult education institution, who hazarded that 'partnership' really meant 'channelled competition'.

Why partnership in the education of adults?

The case most generally made out for greater partnership in the education of adults is that it creates participation among practitioners and encourages appropriate dialogue and negotiation among teachers and learners. It is also observed to work better than provision developed by random forces (Chadwick, 1984b, p. 8) and enables progression and access to post-school learning establishments that do not necessarily include the term 'adult' in their title. Partnership can be found between different agencies and also within a single organisation, especially when it is large and complex. In the course of this project, various arguments were identified in favour of closer partnership between further education colleges and adult education institutions. The main ones were:

— to ensure better provision, given limited resources (which in some cases are diminishing in real terms);

— to develop a broad spectrum of services, especially where identified needs are becoming more specialised or simply greater in number and range, or where clients and institutions are spread out over a wide geographical area;

— to make better use of the full range of available resources, whether human or capital;

— to avoid unnecessary duplication of programmes (this argument was very common);

— to co-ordinate bids for 'new money' which is being made available through various government or private initiatives;

— to enable smoother 'progression' for students throughout the range of post-school learning opportunities, including higher education;

— to provide partners with mutual enrichment. (This argument assumes that both parties must change in certain ways – the further education colleges to acknowledge the needs of the increasing numbers of adult students for personal growth, and the adult education institutions to establish firmer priorities and practices. Each can influence the other positively, and jointly work towards a more comprehensive curriculum for adult students.);

— to ensure the continued survival of both sets of partners in their dealings with external funding bodies. (In the search for greater cost-effectiveness and efficiency, LEAs also may be considering the reduction in number of their educational institutions. Hence some adult education institutions and further education colleges may feel that an alliance is necessary.);

— to provide a central comprehensive educational advice and guidance service for adults. (Marketing thus assumes an enhanced role.)

This list indicates a powerful mixture of philosophical and pragmatic justification for partnership, but, despite this, a considerable degree of ambivalence towards the idea of partnership was detected during the project.

What inhibits partnership?

Even with the most powerful and persuasive arguments for partnership, competition and rivalry persist. The following list of factors that inhibit good practice in partnerhip is an amalgam of points made in documents like a 1978 Essex Working Party Report on Community Education and the 1981 ACACE Report on *Protecting the Future for Adult Education*. These are supplemented by impressions arising from the field-work.

— The present pluralistic educational system does not lend itself to easy relationships between its various sectors and agencies.

— Inadequate consultative machinery, especially at LEA and adult education institution level.

— Where it applies, the need to bring in a higher fee income, because of net budgeting procedures, encourages adult education institutions to 'go commercial'.

— The existence of '104 separate local policies', which means that there is no common set of criteria or practices in the education of adults.

— Inadequate legislation, particularly the 1944 Education Act, which does not give sufficient priority or guidance for the education of adults.

— The belief in some quarters that competition is a natural and desirable phenomenon, which produces the best results in a market economy.

— Legislation, staffing and career structures, administrative structures and machinery, and conditions of service inhibit the development of an integrated service. Compared to further education, most adult education

posts are low graded, and many are part time. There are limited opportunities for promotion because of the generally peripheral nature of adult education in further education colleges.

— Insecurity and fear lead to distrust. Uncertainty is not always conducive to experimenting with new organisational arrangements and taking risks.

— Staff from further colleges and adult education institutions appear to know very little about each other and tend to hold negative stereotypes about each other's organisations.

— Inappropriate structures within the DES are said to put their stamp on other structures lower down the system. It is argued that greater genuine partnership or integration in the field is unlikely when the lead is not properly given at the top, with separate divisions FHE 2 and 3 and separate inspectors for further and higher education.

— It is unclear why such posts could not be fused into an Inspectorate for Continuing Education.

— In localities where there has been a history of personality or institutional conflict, it is difficult to move into a more open and harmonious relationship.

On a general note, organisational theory suggests that it is in the very nature of organisations to compete for territory. They also breed internal misunderstanding and conflict (Handy, 1985, p. 57). Such factors inhibiting partnership are likely to be found in varying permutations and degrees in all LEAs. Where closer forms of partnership or integration are under consideration, these factors have to be openly acknowledged and addressed.

Strengths of further education colleges

The point has been made already that further education colleges have an important role to play in increasing educational opportunities for adults. Where further education colleges themselves are recruiting older adult students, a number of reasons are put forward for this shift of direction. These include:

— The growing importance of continuing education.

— The blurring of 'vocational' and 'non-vocational' distinctions, so that colleges can no longer be seen (if they ever have been) as solely providers of 'vocational' education for young adults.

— The need for easy links and transitions between different parts of the post-school education system to meet individual student needs.

— Under-used college resources – staff in some subjects are having difficulty in finding a sufficient number of contact hours, and hence the market for adult students becomes a source for topping these up. Similarly, less traditional forms of learning such as workshops and drop-in centres become increasingly attractive.

— The same demographic trends that have resulted in falling school rolls are now having an impact on further education colleges. Thus, while the majority of their students will probably continue to be drawn from the 16-19 age range, a larger proportion than hitherto is likely to be made up of older adult students. Many of this latter group will require more flexible forms of provision.

— In some cases, aggregated budgetary procedures for continuing education encourage further education colleges to take advantage of funds available for provision for older adult students.

— Some further education colleges would argue that this venture into the adult education field is nothing new: it is merely a continuation of established practice.

— Further education colleges traditionally have been organised to operate on a three-session day – morning, afternoon and evening. For this reason, they can adapt fairly easily to absorbing older adult students at times best suited to their individual needs.

— Many further education colleges are housed in premises comparatively more modern and suitable than many free-standing adult education institutions.

— Especially in fields such as new technology, further education colleges can offer older adult students subject expertise and equipment, which is less likely to be so readily available elsewhere.

— Because of their larger scale, it is easier for further education colleges to redeploy resources.

— It is important for further education colleges to become involved with older adult students to encourage the spread of good educational practice. The Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education, changes in BTEC and C&G

courses, and the introduction of the GCSE in schools and post-16 education institutions are indicative of the ways in which teaching, learning and assessment principles and methods are changing. Middle-level further education college staff may find their association with older adult students a positive help in preparing to cater for the new wave of school-leavers nurtured by contemporary experiences and relationships within schools and society at large.

— Further education college-based provision would confer greater status upon staff engaged in the education of adults. Adult educators have always felt that they belong to a marginal service. Further education colleges are large and powerful institutions, and some of that power may rub off on that part of the service concerned with adult students.

— If provision was college based, salary scales and conditions of service would become unified and commensurate with the amount of work involved. Some other examples of educational provision for adults have depended greatly on unpaid overtime and zeal.

For those adult educators who advocate a merger with further education colleges, there is the feeling that the old adult education service can no longer remain detached, but must be prepared to go in and influence the colleges, and perhaps initially get a little bruised in the process. They see this as a challenge and an opportunity which must not be shirked. Even they, however, agree on the absolute necessity of protecting the budget available for the education of adults within the college and on careful negotiations which spell out respective roles, responsibilities, and contingencies should the arrangement subsequently prove unworkable.

In a comparative analysis, of course, one of the common dangers is to compare the best of one system with the worst of another. Currently, no doubt, elements of good and bad practice will be found with both sets of partners. But, for the sake of balance, it is important to be aware of the counter-arguments advanced against basing provision for the education of adults within further education colleges in favour of the work of free-standing adult education institutions.

Strengths of free-standing adult education institutions

Adult education institutions generally see themselves cast in the role of midget against the further education colleges' giant. There is a great deal of apprehension about the formers' future, tied up as it is with future provision for the education of adults. Often, adult education institutions see themselves as the sole champions and protectors of the faith and their flock. Let the further education colleges take over, they say, and our clients will be sacrificed at the altar of

rationalisation. In fact, it would be fallacious to overstress the distinctiveness of adult education curriculum (see Keddy, in Thompson, 1980, 45ff) just as it would be to ignore the development of some exciting innovations in further education colleges. Nevertheless, it is important to be aware of the kind of ideal that the adult education institutions have in mind and would wish to see perpetuated in any future arrangement.

Since Mee and Wiltshire conducted their survey of adult education centres in 1978, a great deal has changed. Advocates of free standing centres, however, maintain that their continued and assured existence alone can ensure the following:

— They can create a 'total adult education' environment through appropriate premises, student and staff facilities, self-governing clubs and societies, social activities, exhibitions, recitals, cultural events, newsletters and publications.

— Centres embrace all types of study, participation and partnership in a largely self-governing community.

— Centres enjoy a measure of financial protection so they can respond quickly to market possibilities and social need.

— Centres have more direct contact with their catchment area and are best suited to facilitate the development of appropriate neighbourhood provision.

— Their mobility, flexibility and on-the-spot availability, a major asset, is contrasted with the further education colleges' static physical base, although this may often be an unjustified stereotype.

— Centres are geared to accommodate the complete range of age, intellect and background of adult students.

— Adult education has a strong ethos of public service, whereas college staff are taken to be institutionally orientated and classroom based and biased, although this could be said to be an extreme example of the kind of stereotyping referred to earlier.

— Since relatively few adults currently gain access to further and higher education opportunities (although the proportion of adults in the further education population is increasing), the existing adult education service is

their principal lifeline and must be preserved. They are the principal 'first-stage' institutions offering the chance of a return to study.

As this list demonstrates, further education colleges and adult education institutions can easily come to see each other as rivals. It is within an atmosphere of uncertainty, mutual suspicion and doubt that negotiations for partnership often take place.

Fear of the loss of autonomy is a natural response, and adult education institutions often feel themselves to be supplicants, or at best junior partners. But they too have their critics.

Despite these opposing views and constraints, it is heartening to note the extent to which many further education colleges and adult education institutions are working to establish closer links with each other. A central consideration in these moves is the extent to which adult and further education services, either separately or jointly, are capable of satisfying adult students' demands for education and training for work or leisure.

The next section gives some examples of how certain institutions have attempted to pool their resources in the interests of their adult students, through various forms of collaboration.

PART II

SOME MODELS AND EXAMPLES OF COLLABORATION

4. SOME MODELS IN PRACTICE

In this section, four different forms of institutional working relationships are described briefly. More detailed illustrations of these can be found in Chapter 5.

A 'curriculum for the town'

In Southend-on-Sea, a large college of technology and a large, free-standing adult education centre operate almost cheek by jowl. Linkage in this instance is based upon communication and co-operation between the two institutions. A growing local demand for educational provision for adults, and sympathetic senior staff, has led to co-operation over brochures, staff training, basic education, educational guidance, and approaches to the unemployed.

At certain levels, there has been a positive desire for collaboration between the college and the centre, which may well grow closer in the future. The personality, interests and background of key staff have helped to implement informal co-operation. Significantly, perhaps, both the college principal and vice-principal have previous experience of adult education, one as an LEA officer and the other as an adult education organiser. To complement this experience, the principal of the adult education centre has significant knowledge of both school and further education sectors, while the college Adult Education Co-ordinator holds a London Diploma in Adult Education, and served for about a year as the head of an adult education centre before taking up his present post.

Participation in an FEU-funded curriculum-led institutional development (CLID) project led to an internal college reorganisation, which retained but loosened the old departmental structure and gave certain staff (such as the Adult Education Co-ordinator) college-wide developmental responsibilities. The Adult Education Co-ordinator reports directly to the college vice-principal. Inevitably, tensions still exist within the college and between the college and the nearby adult education centre, but on the whole these are managed and contained by judicious alliances and personal relationships. Anticipated changes in senior county staff probably help explain why the Adult Education Service (which administratively is part of Community Education but separate from the

Youth Service) is for the time being cautious about entering into closer contacts with the college. Financial and enrolment procedures also present certain constraints.

A reorganised college

The college of further education at Weston-super-Mare has recently been redesignated, having formerly been a technical college. Not long ago, the college underwent reorganisation from a departmental basis to that of a matrix system, where Burnham points are earned collectively for the college and then distributed internally. There is an avowed determination at senior management level to create an ethos and organisation appropriate to a 'responsive college', although the ethos is difficult to reflect in a written report such as this. To look after local adult education interests, the college vice-principal has been designated as the Area Adult Education Officer. Within the college, there is an Adult and Continuing Education Section which reports directly to the vice-principal. In effect, therefore, the vice-principal currently doubles as Area Adult Education Officer and facilitator of the college Adult and Continuing Education Section. In the Adult and Continuing Education Section there is evidence of an increasingly innovative role played by relatively junior college staff in general in developing a greater responsiveness to the needs of adult students.

In Weston-super-Mare, the seven departments were split into 14 'schools' and provision for adults is expected to be made by all of these, including provision in outlying areas. Although identification of need is currently the responsibility of staff with specific adult education responsibilities, it is intended that other aspects of curriculum development - including design, delivery, and evaluation - are the responsibility of the college's schools. Adult and further education services are jointly marketed.

This form of 'partnership' is unique in Avon County where there are various organisational relationships based on historical and geographical differences. The college Principal has a personal vision of the college as a resource for the whole community. While, on paper, the college is organised on a matrix system of schools and sections, old departmental traditions would appear to die hard in some cases. The college supported adult education in the previous year from its own budget in order to maintain provision. Hence senior management is currently imposing more rigid internal financial controls - which may have an adverse effect on the current level of adult education provision - through either cuts in part-time staff or an increase in fees. Traditional 'recreational' classes may be under particular threat. The Adult and Continuing Education Section has been winning new sources of funds for the college from other agencies.

Attitudes towards the MSC (now the Training Agency) within the college vary -

as they seem to do generally - from ambivalence on the part of the college management to enthusiasm from junior, newer staff. Although the MSC is significantly altering traditional patterns of funding, especially in WRNAFE, there are signs that its rigorous course requirements and insistence on detailed WRNAFE development plans are inducing more established college staff to adopt a more 'client-centred' approach and consider more seriously proposals involving educational opportunities for adults.

As previously indicated, all schools in the college are expected to make provision for adults, both on and off site. Certain schools are beginning to work quite closely with the Adult and Continuing Education Section, but everyone agrees that there is still a long way to go.

Voluntary association

Kirklees is a Metropolitan District Council with administrative headquarters in Huddersfield. Two different forms of collaboration were considered here. The first concerns English as a Second Language - a specific curriculum area shared between separately organised adult and further education services - and the second is the co-ordinating role of the Education Support Grant Team. Kirklees has a significant ethnic minority population which originated from the New Commonwealth and Pakistan. The 1981 census indicated that about 9% of households in Kirklees were headed by people born in the New Commonwealth or Pakistan. It has experienced a virtual collapse of its once prosperous textile, engineering and chemical industries. There is a high level of unemployment, concentrated especially amongst minority ethnic groups. Own-language speaking to the virtual exclusion of English is particularly high among women from certain families of rural Asian origin, or from Muslim communities.

The council is subject to changes of political control. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Adult Education Service's resources were reduced considerably, resulting in some demoralisation. Nevertheless, enrolments have risen since then and a considerable amount of voluntary community work and home tutor activity takes place, without too much central direction. The separately organised Leisure Services are also involved in several projects which would not be out of place if run by the Adult Education Service. The Education Directorate, however, is trying to provide greater leadership, and firmer directions can be expected once it has fully implemented its response to the *Swann Report* which made schools a top priority. A review of Adult and Continuing Education is expected shortly. Meanwhile, the Education Support Grant Team concerned with unemployment issues has done a great deal to bring together various agencies, especially through inter-agency working parties. Some feel that such a co-ordinating initiative should not have had to depend upon a temporary team set up for a very short term, with 70% of its funds

coming from external sources. There is no doubt, however, that the work of this team and spontaneous collaboration in English as a Second Language provide two more interesting examples of linkages between providers in making educational provision for adults.

Jointly resourced educational advice and guidance

Hampshire LEA positively advocates links and partnerships wherever possible between its adult and further education services. It is a large authority, with significant rural and urban communities. There is a commitment to move towards an integrated community education service, which would incorporate provision for adults and youths. At present, several different models of provision are to be found in the county. Six of the thirteen adult, youth and community institutes are now college based, and all currently operate on a flexible funding, autonomous budgetary basis.

Within this context the Southampton Education and Information Centre for Adults provides an interesting example of good practice in collaboration. Of special note is its consortium approach involving, amongst other providers, three neighbouring adult, youth and community institutes, one further education college, and one institute of higher education. All five institutions share the common denominator of the Southampton travel-to-work area. All these organisations provide resources to a common pool, under the oversight of the Southampton Adult Education Panel. In this arrangement can be discerned an instance of good, growing and innovative collaboration between education providers for adults in a particular locality. It offers information, referral and counselling services to adults throughout the year, and a special publicity, information and guidance initiative in late August.

5. CASE STUDIES

Southend-on-Sea

In this case study, the two collaborators were Southend College of Technology and Southend Adult Education Centre.

Southend College of Technology

Southend College of Technology is a large Group 7 college, with stated aims that include:

- providing full-time and part-time education in:
  - a large number of areas related to employment,
  - areas not directly related to employment, such as GCE,
  - some higher education courses;
- providing educational opportunities on a day-release or block-release basis from employment;
- 'to serve the needs of the local community in collaboration with other providers, by providing a range of educational opportunities for adults. To offer opportunities for continuing education, including ... the retraining and updating of adults'.(*College Statement of Objectives*)

There are about 2800 adults over 20 (of whom about 2000 are over 25) using the college facilities in one way or another.

Opportunities include:

- Return to Study;
- New Opportunities for Women;
- Towards a Job;
- Restart;
- GCE 'A' level and 'O' level studies;
- parent education;

— B/TEC courses, including units specifically for adults;

— about 100 'Adult Education' courses, run mainly in the evening;

— use of the college as a designated Open University Study Centre;

— Access programmes, as part of an Essex Consortium;

— open workshops in Mathematics and Basic Education;

— a crèche;

— use of the college as a WEA centre;

— an increasing day-time emphasis;

— open learning facilities.

Southend Adult Education Centre

Based at Southchurch, Southend Adult Education Centre is a large centre which offers about 540 courses and recorded 7698 enrolments in November 1985.

Features of its operation include:

— canteens sub-contracted to Maybrook Adult Training Centre;

— an administrative base for the ABE advisory tutor and ALBSU project worker;

— crèches;

— reorganisation following recent administrative rationalisation;

— pressure to be influenced by the 'industrial model' and notions of 'productivity';

— an increasing day-time emphasis.

In the view of the principal, 'strong' courses at the Centre tend to be those that are seen to be vocationally useful low-capital subjects or those which address areas of disadvantage. Declining or threatened provision is anticipated by the Centre where either the private sector or larger institutions are better resourced,

or where there are costs additional to fees. The latter instance does not apply where courses such as DIY are felt by students to hold out the prospect of ultimate savings.

Instances of collaboration

Figure 1 (pages 26-29) gives an indication of how far Southend College has moved along the road leading to the education of adults. It can be seen that, of fourteen 'development areas', five involve explicit contacts with the Adult Education Centre, in the areas of adult education, basic education, curriculum mapping, educational guidance for adults, and marketing. In some cases, other agencies too are involved. Instances of collaboration, current or being considered, between the two institutions include:

— sharing the results produced by new project workers;

— a joint survey of post-school educational opportunities;

— continuing to issue a joint prospectus;

— continuing to advertise through a joint newspaper supplement;

— continuing to collaborate on staff training and development;

— the Centre continuing to afford ABE advice to the college;

— the college continuing to accord the Centre's principal observer status on its Adult and Continuing Education Sub-Committee;

— a continuation, and expansion where possible, of established networks;

— continuing a shared rota for educational advice at the local Jobcentre;

— continuing to contribute to, and use, the Essex database 'Learning Line'.

What are the mechanisms of this collaboration?

Neither party would pretend that the collaboration is absolute or binding, or without its flaws or strains. Nonetheless, the common desire to keep open channels of communication has helped reduce conflict. Where the two services are organisationally separate, lack of resources and structural anomalies, rather than will, are probably the factors which most inhibit the development of more joint projects and programmes.

Figure 1: Southend College of Technology's Development Areas

Developments in education/training for adults

Development area	Progress to date	Short-term (6 month) goals	Longer term goals	Linkage with other development areas, etc.
Access	Four-term Access course as member of Essex FE/HE Consortium operating since May 1986	Develop 'Access to Nursing' Programme in partnership with health authority	Comprehensive programme for adult returners integrating Access and Return to Study courses Special attention to Access into Vocational Further Education	
Adult Education (General programme)	Substantially increased enrolments for 1986/87 (especially GCE work) Closer working relationship with adult education centre	Review and develop work in: - art and design - languages - engineering - construction	Systematic evaluation of programme Continuing development within skills and resources	GCE Marketing Adult education centre Staff development Student services Departments and units
Adult Training Strategy	MSC funding secured for: - Work preparation courses - New Opportunities for Women - Restart Contracts for managing agents in New Job Training Scheme	Review of JTS		MSC liaison

Basic Education	**Well-established workshops in Maths, English and Computing/IT**	**Develop relationship between college Maths/Communications units and ABE advisory team**		**Adult education centre Staff development Student services**
Crèche	**Substantial MSC funding secured for free college/NACRO crèche on Westborough site**	**Negotiate space in main site for early transfer of crèche** **Develop use of crèche as student training resource**		**Student services**
Curriculum Mapping	**Informal dialogue between college/adult education centre**		**Funding for research project on an ETA curriculum map for Southend?**	**Adult education centre**
Educational Guidance for Adults	**College providing guidance service at Jobcentre and contributing to local guidance network**	**Bid for Community Programme project for full-time guidance service based at college with outreach**	**Develop coherent reception facility at college to include guidance**	**Student services**
Marketing (including advertising)	**Joint advertising with other local providers**	**Needs analysis programme** **Establish relationship with BBC Radio Essex.**		**Marketing Adult education centre**

Open Learning	Providing service to 100 students	Establishment of college open learning co-ordinator Continuing programme of staff development in open learning	Development of open learning resource base Explore possibilities of The Open College	Student services Staff development MSC liaison
PICKUP	Some activity in Engineering and Management departments College Business Centre established January 1987 Employer-targeted marketing	Support for Business Centre project managers Enhanced training opportunities for women in employment		Marketing
Return to Study	105 students at 9 hours x 36 weeks with improved support systems	No further growth anticipated Review of RTS (December) quality not quantity	Integrated RTS/Access programme with technology/science options	Staff development
Special Needs	Part-time 'Link' provision for Accredited Training Centre students	Extend opportunities for adults with mental handicaps (mini-Access course)	Befriending scheme to support integration of students with moderate learning difficulties into mainstream provision	Student services Staff development

Staff Development	ACSET stage 1 & 2 courses tutor teams represent colleges AE centre	College to offer C&G 730 from September 1987, and to contribute to Area 731 course	Staff development
	Programme of in-house training events	College involvement in county training initiative in reception and guidance practice	
Unemployed Adults	Education desk at Jobcentre MSC-funded short courses Restart programme JTS provision	No further development pending review of JTS	

Source:
Barry Hendry, Adult Education Co-ordinator, Southend College of Technology

Advocates of partnership are divided over whether structures or personalities are more important. In fact, present structures and line management paths at county level do not appear to lend themselves easily to a more unified pattern of provision in the field. DES structures seem to show a similar lack of unity. Currently, therefore, it is clearly the efforts of concerned professionals that are able occasionally to overcome such structural hurdles – the 'progressive' and 'interventionary' individuals described by Chadwick (1984b, p. 8). This seems to be happening in three general ways:

— open lines of communication between mutually sympathetic senior management at both institutions;

— amongst full-time junior staff and part-time tutors in both institutions who are spearheading initiatives and often take on large administrative loads, on top of their teaching commitments, in particular developmental areas;

— a general recognition and acceptance that the objectives of the two institutions are becoming closer, but remain essentially separate. The college claims to have no wish to depart from an intrinsically 'vocational' or 'second chance' strategy and interfere with the Centre's traditional programmes.

Sources of potential competition

Despite this undoubted goodwill and effort, both institutions recognise only too well that there are still many areas of potential or actual disagreement. Generally, this is unstated and remains an item on the 'hidden agenda', but it carries considerable force, especially because of high levels of frustration caused by structural factors which are not always visible or easily understood. Some of this conflict is caused by:

— uncertainty over county policy and staffing in the near future;

— a fear that formalised links would kill off the goodwill that stems from a voluntary association;

— a difference in perception over the advantages and disadvantages of a comprehensive service. (One member of staff of the Centre saw the key difficulty as being the so-called 'numbers game' – 'a statistical and financial one – it's names on registers and bottoms on seats. This does not bode well for a comprehensive education service'. In contrast, a senior member of staff of the college felt that a comprehensive service would help to overcome that difficulty.);

— the feeling that each partner still has some way to go to put its own house in order;

— the previous unwritten code of practice, whereby the Centre offered 'O' levels and the college 'A' levels, has been breached, with each institution beginning to break into the other's examination market, although consultations about this have been held;

— anticipation that each institution may soon be constrained to make competing bids for 'new funds';

— the feeling that the two institutions already have far too much work without embarking upon further time-consuming and complicated forms of collaboration;

— perceptions of many established part-time organising and teaching staff – especially those whose appointments pre-date those of senior management – who fear that the Centre is in danger of losing out to the college.

Despite these factors which contribute to tension between the two institutions, there seems to be a general recognition of each other's strengths and weaknesses and areas of internal sensitivity. Obstacles to a closer relationship are by no means held to be insuperable.

Postscript

Since the field-work for this report was carried out, the Essex Adult Education Service's budget for teaching costs was 'capped' at a level lower than previous consumption. For a growing centre, this could have important operational implications. Tension might well arise between conflicting pressures, such as those generated by the opposition between demand-led and curriculum-led models, and the possible expectation that adult education centre principals should give income generation a high priority while maintaining an adequate establishment of support staff.

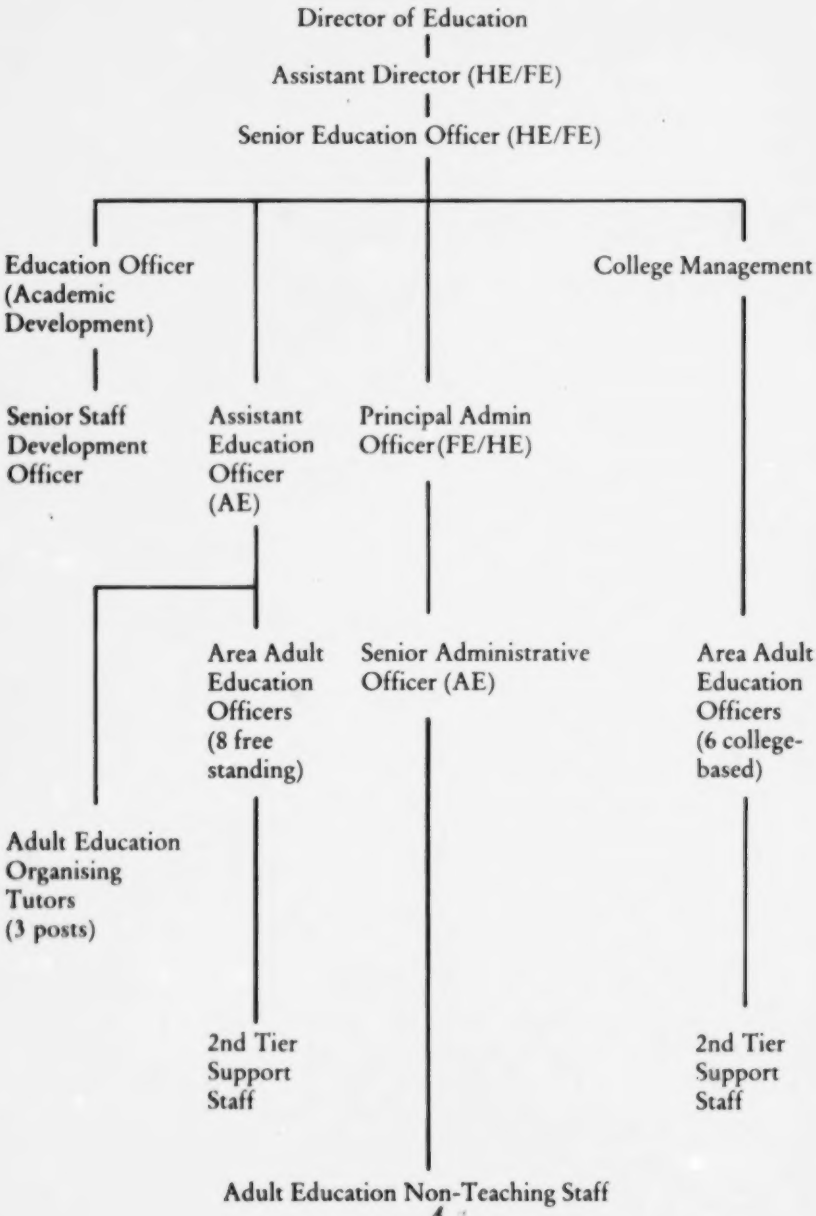
Weston-super-Mare

Weston-super-Mare College of Further Education serves one of 14 adult education areas in Avon County. Of these, six are college based (although there are eight colleges of FE) and eight are free standing.

The organisation of the Avon Adult Education Service

The organisation of the Adult Education Service in Avon is shown in Figure 2. Two administrative arms of the post-school education sector (further education and adult education) only meet within the LEA organisational structure at the

Figure 2: The Organisation of the Avon Adult Education Service


Director of Education
Assistant Director (HE/FE)
Senior Education Officer (HE/FE)
Education Officer (Academic Development)
Senior Staff Development Officer
Assistant Education Officer (AE)
Principal Admin Officer (FE/HE)
College Management
Area Adult Education Officers (8 free standing)
Senior Administrative Officer (AE)
Area Adult Education Officers (6 college-based)
Adult Education Organising Tutors (3 posts)
2nd Tier Support Staff
2nd Tier Support Staff
Adult Education Non-Teaching Staff

third tier post of Senior Education Officer (FE/HE). Historical and geographical factors have resulted in two kinds of adult education area, administered differently. The latest adult education review was not completed at the time of writing, but the LEA is anxious to articulate and develop a standard adult education policy for the whole county.

Avon County mechanisms for linkage

There are eight main vehicles with potential for promoting links in the post-16 education sector, although they operate at different levels. These are:

— the Regional Advisory Council for Further Education at Taunton;

— the Regional Advisory Board of the MSC (now the Training Agency) at Bristol;

— fourteen Adult Education Area Advisory Committees, whose formation has been delayed;

— the Further Education Staff Development Unit, which also caters for adult education staff, and is seen by the county as a crucial instrument for forging links between further and adult education;

— the Monitoring and Evaluation Working Party, which has a limited life;

— the Further Education Sub-Committee;

— LEA and institutional reviews which promote organisational rethinking;

— the WRNAFE development plans which have the potential to include, regularly, sections on educational opportunities for adults.

Weston-super-Mare College of Further Education and internal collaboration

Weston College is unique within its authority in currently having a vice-principal who doubles as Area Adult Education Officer and manager of the Adult Continuing Education Section in an effort to raise the internal profile and status of adult education. Indeed, there are a variety of internal linkages for common goals, which centre on an attempt to produce a unified college response as a community resource. The Adult Continuing Education Section is only one part of this endeavour, but it has a crucial role in facilitating initiatives to reorientate the institution towards expanding its contribution to the education of adults.

The college organisational structure

It is not easy to represent the college's organisational structure in a diagram. About two years ago, it reorganised along the lines of a matrix system, with staff having affiliation to one or more of three main areas of work. These are:

— academic work within one or more of the 13 schools;

— senior management duties carried out by the principal, the vice-principal, the assistant principals (responsible for curriculum development, marketing and staffing), and the chief administrative officer;

— collegiate staff serving the whole institution, including the director of studies, the collegiate tutor, the library and resources tutor, the YTS co-ordinator, and student welfare and Adult Continuing Education Section staff. The collective work of the college is handled where appropriate by school meetings, the academic board, governing body and Avon County Council. The aim of the matrix restructuring is to create an appropriate organisational and budgetary base for the college to serve as a community resource.

Facts about Weston College

In 1985-86, Weston College had a full-time equivalent teaching establishment of 132.3. Altogether about 9,000 students enrolled, giving a full-time student equivalent of 2,147. In common with other colleges of further education, students mainly attended within one of four principal categories: full time, released part time, non-released part-time day, and evening.

Innovations at Weston College for students over 16 years

Apart from YTS, CPVE and the GCSE initiatives, Weston College is increasingly offering opportunities and information for adults of various ages and dispositions. These include:

— Start, Restart and REPLAN programmes for the unemployed;

— special educational needs classes;

— a traditional 'menu' of adult education classes;

— ABE and ESL classes, principally conducted in outstations;

— community programme packages.

To assist in the co-ordination and coherence of this complex range of activities, the vice-principal set up a central course file and room allocation system.

Constraints upon the college

While constant attempts are made to promote linkages within the college, a number of constraints are mentioned by staff. Included are:

— external factors over which the college has no control, such as fee remissions policy and sometimes apparently unsynchronised county initiatives, such as staff development, which can clash with other college activities;

— old departmental attitudes which die hard in some areas of the college;

— inadequate resources for 'invisible' work such as making contact with clients and potential clients;

— the great demands made upon the college's research and development capacity by fresh external initiatives;

— uncertainty about how to deal with part-time staff and volunteer support when budgeting has to be determined on a short-term basis;

— the unpredictable outcome of current county reviews of budget, staffing and resources;

— the absence of a specific county further education adviser.

Internal college collaboration mechanisms

To address these constraints and develop the institution as a community resource, the college attempts to co-ordinate its work through:

— more involvement of staff at all levels;

— heads of school meetings;

— the academic board;

— staff development;

— staff with a collegiate responsibility.

The work of the Adult Continuing Education Section

Because the section's work is so varied, it operates as a loose confederation of staff. However, its organisational structure gives it a unitary form:

— head of section (currently, vice-principal);

— adult education organiser – LII;

— co-ordinator for the unemployed – LI;

— ABE tutor organiser – temporary full-time LI;

— ESL tutor organiser – Associate Lecturer, 15 hours;

— special educational needs team – 3 x LI;

— language tutor – LI;

— on secondment – LII.

The section ensures college-wide provision for adults; much of its work is developmental. Schools are the 'academic resource' for the education of adults, and the college as a whole is responsible for curriculum and provision in outlying areas.

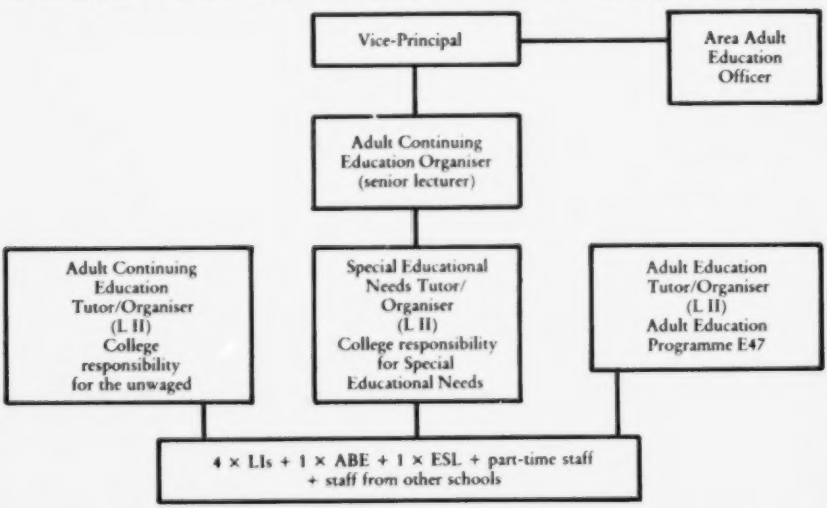

Vice-Principal
Area Adult Education Officer
Adult Continuing Education Organiser (senior lecturer)
Adult Continuing Education Tutor/Organiser (L II) College responsibility for the unwaged
Special Educational Needs Tutor/ Organiser (L II) College responsibility for Special Educational Needs
Adult Education Tutor/Organiser (L II) Adult Education Programme E47
4 × LIs + 1 × ABE + 1 × ESL + part-time staff + staff from other schools

Figure 3: The new organisational structure of the Adult Continuing Education Section at Weston-super-Mare College

Postscript

Since the field-work for this report was carried out, the college has proposed a new structure for the Section. Figure 3 shows how this is organised. There is clearly improved status for adult education as a result of the integration with FE.

Kirklees Metropolitan District Council

The two main forms of collaboration that were considered in Kirklees were those engendered by different providers of English as a Second Language (ESL) and the co-ordinating work of the Education Support Grant team.

ESL and minority ethnic groups in the locality

The most visible minority ethnic groups within Kirklees' jurisdiction are those of Afro-Caribbean or Asian origin. There are also inhabitants whose families arrived from Eastern Europe. There is a considerable amount of semi-formal and voluntary ESL provision, such as that which takes place through mosque and temple societies, secular welfare agencies, the community programme, and various community associations. A voluntary community project called Community Education Training Unit also does some work in Kirklees, though it is based in Halifax. Formal programmes are available through the LEA's adult education centres, colleges of further education, and the West Yorkshire Language Link Scheme (in effect, the local Industrial Language Training Unit). The Directorate of Leisure Services also makes a contribution through various community schemes. Section 11 funding is used to support ESL work both within the colleges and the adult education service.

ESL (or English Language Support – ELS – as it is sometimes known in colleges) is bound up with difficult issues of gender, unemployment, race and community relations, appropriate learning methods, and adequacy of provision. In Kirklees there are comparatively few ESL students coming forward, and those seem to be principally of Asian rather than Afro-Caribbean origin. Student progression has been difficult to facilitate, and funds come from several different budgets. Because of inadequate resources and the need for greater co-ordination, the agencies which principally contribute to ESL provision decided voluntarily to work together on a specific project – the production of a booklet on the availability of ESL opportunities.

The collaborators operate mainly in the north and centre of Kirklees, which has a total population of about 380,000. To the north, around Dewsbury and Batley, the North East Kirklees Adult Education Centre and Dewsbury and Batley Technical and Art College cater predominantly for people whose own languages are those spoken in Gujarat or Pakistan. Based on Huddersfield in the centre, Huddersfield Technical College, Marsh Adult Education Centre and the West

Yorkshire Language Link operate in areas containing Afro-Caribbean, Sikh and Pakistani minority ethnic groups.

Huddersfield Technical College

ESL in colleges is generally a very small part of their total provision. It has a departmental organisational base in Huddersfield Technical College which explicitly seeks to establish closer contact with other local providers:

> 'There are close working relationships
> between the college and other educational
> establishments in the area.'
>
> (*1985-6 Part-Time Prospectus*)

The Department of General and Communication Studies has an English for Overseas section, and attempts to promote access to higher education for ethnic minorities. Within the overall departmental structure, individual sections are virtually separate agencies, but two other units seem to share the key to promoting internal partnership in ESL work. These are the established Basic Education Section, and the new Multicultural Unit. Although there is no specific Adult Education Department, the college offers a considerable number of general educational opportunities for adults.

West Yorkshire Language Link

West Yorkshire Language Link staff are on the Kirklees Metropolitan District Council payroll, but the operation is funded indirectly by the MSC (now the Training Agency) and is subject to periodic review. While maintaining its organisational separateness, West Yorkshire Language Link shares premises with Marsh Adult Education Centre, which is a convenient arrangement. Strictly speaking, it now does little ESL work as such. In line with other agencies which have their roots in Industrial Language Training Unit work, it has shifted its emphasis to courses on Communication for Employment and Training and is more concerned to increase awareness of racism and work towards equality of opportunity. Nevertheless, West Yorkshire Language Link still has expertise in materials development, which is recognised as helpful by others more immediately concerned with ESL provision. This complements the work of the Northern Race Training Unit, formed in September 1983 and based in Batley.

Home Tutor Schemes

All home tutor scheme work takes place under the aegis of adult education centres, and is located mainly around Dewsbury, Batley, Cleckheaton and Huddersfield. The four main elements of these schemes are home tuition (primarily offered to women of Asian origin), community or neighbourhood classes, in-service tutor training, and induction of volunteers.

Dewsbury and Batley Technical and Art College (DABTAC)

Dewsbury and Batley Technical and Art College became part of Dewsbury Tertiary College in September 1987. 1986 was its 'transitional year'. There are clear signs that the college is seeking to create an image different from that traditionally (and often incorrectly) associated with further education:

> '....we exist to serve the community of North Kirklees, and one of our prime tasks is to help people of all ages to acquire knowledge and skills related to their needs and circumstances. This applies as much to individuals as it does to industrial and commercial undertakings within our locality.'

The college functions on a non-departmental organisational system, with a principal (currently acting), four associate principals, a number of college-wide co-ordinators, and 21 sections. ESL provision is made chiefly through the established English class for women, part-time English classes, and by the new drop-in centre and outreach workers. The latter are something of an innovation for a college of further education, and their progress will be of great interest to other such establishments. These outreach workers have their salaries paid from Section 11 funds. A new senior lecturer has been appointed to promote equal opportunities, and a Multicultural Unit has been established.

Some examples of ESL collaboration

Most collaboration in this field has been of a one-off or informal nature. Where there are professional links outside the authority, these have tended to be more long lived. Examples of working together include:

— inter-institutional contacts, such as those between Dewsbury and Batley College and North Kirklees Adult Education Centre;

— a multi-language publication on ESL learning opportunities throughout Kirklees;

— meetings organised by the National Association for Teachers of ESL to Adults (NATESLA);

— activities of the ESL Staff Development Group, funded by ALBSU.

The Education Support Grant (ESG) Working Parties and ESL

As part of its efforts to promote educational initiatives of benefit to the unemployed, the ESG team set up five working parties, although only four completed their task. One of these deliberated on 'Participation by People from

Ethnic Minorities'*. The attendance list indicates a huge range of local agencies which have some kind of interest in educational provision. A rough breakdown shows that the total membership of the five working parties consisted of about 93 representatives from 54 different organisations. These organisations varied enormously in their size, structure and funding arrangements, and are perhaps indicative of the growing number of 'fringe' agencies that have a rapid turnover of staff.

The ESG working parties constitute a short-term project to establish a framework for collaboration. Overall, the aim has been to create models for 'well co-ordinated cross-sector provision'. Interestingly, the best-attended working party was the one considering the needs of ethnic minorities, about 50% of whose membership was made up by representatives from Black communities. Senior education staff sit on the Continuing Education Group, which serves as the steering committee for the ESG project.

Possibilities for future partnership in ESL

Given this essentially pluralist and fluid situation, there is obviously a need to put collaboration on a firmer footing. Informal co-operation without a clear strategy or policy tends to be shortlived. Possibilities that have been mooted by field-workers include:

— setting a model of senior consultation through regular meetings of the Continuing Education Group;

— establishing an official translation service;

— appointing a specialist advisory inspector for ESL;

— reviewing staff recruitment policies and procedure in the light of equal opportunities criteria. (The authority has subsequently advertised several key posts to deal with such issues.)

There are some encouraging signs that ESL collaboration is linked to a move towards a broader integration of post-16 educational services in Kirklees, and that the undoubted energy and commitment within some parts of the Adult Education Service are beginning to be channelled into priority areas.

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*Members of the working party decided to rename this 'Education for Adults from the Black Communities'.

Southampton Education Information Centre for Adults

Background on LEA structure

Under the County and Deputy County Education Officers, there is a Principal Education Officer (HE/FE) and two Assistant Education Officers, one mainly concentrating on adult, youth and community education and the other on colleges of further education. However, post-16 education also takes place in school sixth forms and sixth form colleges. Hampshire has 14 colleges of further education covering a whole range of provision, and a polytechnic. In 1982, the Adult, Youth and Community Service was reorganised into a pattern of thirteen institutes. At the time of reorganisation, four of the thirteen adult, youth and community institutes were based on colleges of further education and the rest were free-standing. Since then, two more independent institutes have been incorporated into colleges. Each institute was made responsible for a specific geographical area of the county, with its own management committee, and a new staffing structure and remit. A considerable degree of autonomy was accorded by delegating certain powers to local management committees, and a financial policy of flexible funding was introduced. There is a strong drive towards tertiary colleges in Hampshire, which involves a triangular meeting of organisational cultures between schools, further education colleges, and adult education institutions.

Now that the county has experienced some four years of the new adult education pattern, these arrangements are being reviewed in an attempt to engender better collaboration within existing structures. A major concern is how to offer educational opportunities to adults who live in the county's rural areas, and to the substantial number of unemployed. At the last count, the number of unemployed in Southampton alone – excluding its 'travel-to-work area' – was roughly 18,000. This constitutes an unemployment rate of 13.9%.

The 'ethos' of the adult education service

Reorganisation of the post-16 education sector has also included the establishment of several tertiary colleges, particularly in rural areas. As in many other parts of the country, changes and uncertainties have aroused considerable trepidation within the free-standing adult, youth and community institutes about what the future holds in store for them. The Principal Education Officer (HE/FE) retired in 1987, and the outcome of current reviews is awaited. Where a merger has occurred, the size of the adult education department within a college of further education seems to be crucial. Large adult, youth and community institutes based on Eastleigh and South Downs Colleges of Further Education are clearly influencing college thinking, whereas their smaller, newer counterparts at Cricklade and Alton Colleges seem as yet unable to have a significant effect.

Various examples of collaboration

Collaboration from within a college

The SE Hants Adult, Youth and Community Institute is based on South Downs College. There are some interesting comparisons with the college at Weston-super-Mare. Here, the head of a large department has been charged with developing a college-wide perspective on the education of adults. Through this department, a comprehensive adult education programme is being established within the area. Internally, a specialist member of staff was given the task of co-ordinating all part-time adult education work across all departments, on a 'matrix' system. Links between this Institute and other providers include:

— a parent education programme based on Oak Park Community School;

— a probation service project linked with the National Association for Care and Resettlement of Offenders.

— a Socially Independent Disabled scheme operating from Wakefords Community School, directly stimulated by courses mounted at South Downs College;

— a 'special needs' programme which involves a combination of ABE and outreach workers who operate in the grey area between social services and educational services jurisdiction.

Collaboration between adult, youth and community institutes of different patterns

Three institutes – Portsmouth (independent), SE Hants, and Fareham/Gosport (both college based) have an inter-institute training team of long standing, which successfully co-ordinates in-service training for all adult, youth and community staff in their areas. Among the team's activities are:

— regional certificated courses for part-time teachers;

— an 'area'-based City and Guilds 730 course;

— Hampshire Youth Leadership Certificate Courses (Units Ia and Ib) and the new 80-hour Foundation Course;

— short courses on specialist topics.

This co-operation represents a professional – not formalised institutional –

grouping within small areas of dense population, where referrals between agencies are relatively easy to secure.

The New Way Project

In a drive to open up access to educational opportunities for adults with a mental handicap, Winchester (free-standing) and Eastleigh (college based) Adult, Youth and Community Institutes collaborate with the District Health Service and Social Services through a joint management committee. This kind of partnership has been reviewed independently (MacKenzie, 1985), and is now being introduced elsewhere in the county.

The Learning Links pilot scheme, Portsmouth

Funded by the Council for Educational Technology and based on the John Pounds Centre, Learning Links has brought together several different agencies. Subtitled 'A Network to Opportunities', the project aims to use a large computer bank to attract and introduce adults to new knowledge, skills and learning opportunities.

Participating agencies include Portsmouth College of Art, Design and Further Education, the City Council, Portsmouth Adult, Youth and Community Institute, and a voluntary community association. As yet, Highbury College of Technology and the local polytechnic have not felt the need to become involved.

The Southampton Education Information Centre for Adults

The Southampton Education Information Centre for Adults is a particularly good example of inter-agency collaboration, despite inevitable strains and tensions created by resource constraints. Although continued resource contributions from two of the principal original members are in doubt, all known educational opportunities within the Southampton 'travel-to-work' area are included in the Centre's directory.

Interestingly, the Centre originated within Southampton Technical College, through the personal initiative of two staff members in 1981. After three years as a short, intensive annual event, a more formalised administrative and management structure was created by appointing a co-ordinator based at the Southampton Adult, Youth and Community Institute headquarters, and setting up a steering committee. This is a sub-committee of the Southampton Adult Education Panel, an *ad hoc* consortium of all the providers listed as the Centre's contributors. The panel itself attempts to foster co-operation along lines similar to those envisaged by the *Russell Report's* concept of Local Development Committees. However, it is perhaps the sub-committee which, through its concentration upon a specific and continuing project, offers greater opportunities for practical partnership.

Although volunteers continue to be important at the precinct 'shop' during the main period of enrolment, paid staff have increasingly taken over daily operations throughout the year. It is hoped that seven workers from the Community Programme will be employed.

The work of the Centre – which, unlike Portsmouth Learning Links, receives no direct external funding from beyond the county – includes:

— staffing a caravan in the main Southampton shopping precinct in the early autumn. This is operated by a rota of some 40 volunteers from many local providers, and it provides advice and personalised data about educational opportunities, not just a collection of promotional literature;

— a rudimentary all-year-round service, which offers telephone inquiries, clerical support, counselling, and computerised, regularly updated information. In 1986 some 6,000 clients used these facilities.

The foundation of the Centre roughly coincided with the introduction of flexible funding in Hampshire's adult, youth and community institutes' areas. At a time when this might be thought to have created rivalry and competition between institutions for students – especially those who could pay full fees – it is remarkable that this collaborative venture was set up and sustained. Its value would seem to be in its not being identified with a single, 'colonising' institution, but rather seen as a genuine, shared resource, the primary task of which is to serve the interests of clients. As one college vice-principal put it:

> 'Southampton Education Information Centre for Adults is a rare example of sinking institutional differences. The co-operative experience is valuable for representatives of essentially competitive institutions.'

Added to that is the fact that the Centre draws upon the staff, expertise and resources of almost all local educational agencies, and involves – at least during the caravan promotion – collaboration between volunteers and paid professionals.

Future plans

To an important extent, the future of the Centre depends upon the availability of adequate funds and resources. The steering committee's hopes include:

— meeting senior county officers to confirm and consolidate staffing;

— regularising contributions from participating institutions, which at present are on a 'grace and favour' basis;

— using the experience of supervising the Centre to introduce a more consolidated set of procedures for the Southampton Adult Education Panel;

— expanding its careers guidance role for adults;

— introducing a more conscious research and monitoring function;

— recruiting seven Community Programme workers for 1987. (The LEA subsequently made £6,000 available from central funds and agreed to underwrite a full-time co-ordinating post).

The Southampton Seminar on Partnership in Adult and Further Education

In November 1986, the local college of further education and two adult education institutions jointly ran a two-day seminar involving about thirty middle management staff and practitioners. It was felt that they needed to understand each other's work, but had never before been able to meet in sufficient numbers. Indeed, some further education college staff had never talked to each other until the seminar was convened.

The task was to explore ways of offering the most effective provision for adults in the Southampton travel-to-work area. What was wanted was 'an alternative strategy to drawing up bureaucratic guidelines – a co-operative approach based on understanding rather than demarcation'. (Chairperson's opening remarks)

After two days of intensive discussion, the following were among several practical suggestions for partnership, concerned primarily with forging better co-ordinated information and resource links.

Identifying areas of overlap

Working together more closely on three principal areas of overlap – the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), provision for the unemployed, and access opportunities, including open learning.

Participating in 'learning about partnership' projects

It was felt that certain skills, attitudes and resources were necessary to bring about a greater degree of partnership, and that these could be identified and acquired most appropriately by working on specific projects. Much could be teased out of the experience of Southampton Education Information Centre and RESPOND (a local REPLAN project). Other suggestions included joint open days, joint courses, workshops and staff development, and joint planning for GCSE.

Collaboration in GCSE provision

It was felt that planning the GCSE programme was a major contender as a 'learning about partnership' project. Here was a one-off chance to become involved in the formative stage of a major educational development, and generate precedents and experience for future partnerships in other areas of work.

Proposals for collaboration over GCSE

The present arrangement is that the three institutions exchange fixed programme notes once they have been finalised. In view of the far-reaching implications of GCSE as well as CPVE courses for adults, it was felt that a programme co-ordination group should now be established. Initially, its principal task would be scheduling; later, it would consider the rationalisation of provision, staffing needs and resource requirements. A representative from each participating institution should have a mandate for entering into a contract with the others, and a draft programme would be circulated for comment before being finalised.

It was suggested that, as an initial part of this process, an inter-institutional *GCSE Programme Guide* might be produced. In itself, the production of this guide would be a useful exercise in identifying solvable problems and establishing a working basis for partnership procedures. The public would also be less confused if there was a single, co-ordinated directory of what was on offer. Thus, the pending introduction of GCSE for adults was seen as a unique opportunity to develop a particular model of partnership on the basis of mutual trust, understanding, and dependence.

A directory of 'named people' (for GCSE)

At the Southampton seminar it was felt that, to improve the present patchy networks of inter-institutional contacts, each institution should nominate an individual member of staff to liaise with another local institution. Such liaison staff would develop a special relationship with each other so that a network of designated and well-informed contacts would enable participating institutions to know more about each other. This directory would be generally available.

Conclusion

While none of these suggestions was binding, the seminar was important in acknowledging the need for greater partnership and in urging a practical plan of action for consideration and approval by policy makers. It highlighted several key themes and issues and proceeded, from a general commitment within the further education college, to attempt to develop more responsive and flexible attitudes and practices for adult learning. This grouping of local agencies demonstrated a concern in common with a major national agency (the FEU) to promote collaboration. Indeed the FEU project worker was invited to make a key input to their deliberations on the basis of the experience of the RP371

project. Specific examples of need for collaboration were identified, and some practical suggestions made.

PART III

A WAY FORWARD

6. ASPECTS OF GOOD PRACTICE

The experience of other organisations

The post-16 education sector is not alone in having to face up to the issues of partnership. Factors which have brought this question to a head have also affected a whole range of other services to the public. In 1982, the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux (NACAB) went through a major consultation exercise, some of the conclusions of which have a much wider application and are of relevance to this discussion.

Local collaboration

As NACAB observed, the simplest form of inter-agency co-operation involves the provision of services by one agency for another. This could involve publishing information, or providing mutual support in campaigns, grant applications, etc. Co-operation at this level is usually positive and constructive, as in the case of ESL publicity in Kirklees, and will doubtless continue on a spontaneous, intermittent basis whenever a specific need arises.

Where co-operation has involved attempts to increase the level of co-ordination, however, certain factors must be present if it is to succeed. Collaborative practice will vary enormously, from informal arrangements to formal structured groups, as the four case studies illustrate.

Forms of local collaboration

Using the NACAB typology, several different kinds of collaborative arrangements can be identified:

— groupings of agencies which meet to exchange information and develop contacts (e.g. the Southampton Adult Education Panel);

— groupings brought together for various specific purposes such as the development of inter-agency referral systems (e.g. Southampton Education Information Centre for Adults);

— single interest groupings (e.g. those which may be addressing the implications of GCSE);

— short-term groupings set up to meet an emergency need (e.g. the production of the Kirklees ESL booklet);

— formal groupings set up to devise a strategy and co-ordinate the planning and development of services within a particular area (e.g. Regional Advisory Councils);

— groupings brought together for the purposes of research or review (NACAB, 1982, p. 3).

To this list might be added internal groupings set up to enable and model collaboration within a particular institution (e.g. the Adult Continuing Education Section at Weston College).

Factors contributing to successful collaboration

Certain factors appear to be necessary if local collaboration is to succeed. These are:

— shared objectives as established in the 'contract';

— genuine commitment to collaboration on the part of all the members;

— proper servicing of the group, preferably by paid staff;

— a reason for the continued existence of the group;

— a willingness of all members to accept the group's decisions (NACAB, op cit).

Factors ascribed to lack of success

In instances where attempts at collaboration had foundered, it was found that contributing factors included:

— lack of clearly defined objectives;

— inter-agency suspicion;

— conflict of interest;

— competition for resources;

— lack of proper servicing;

— 'political' incompatibility of members;

— the wrong composition of the group (NACAB, op cit);

— lack of clear commitment to change.

Both sets of factors in the success or failure of collaboration are broadly consistent with those found in general group theory. This suggests that more attention should be given to the process of forming and maintaining the group of collaborating agencies in addition to concentrating on agenda items and formal procedural issues.

Collaboration at national level

Two forms of collaboration were identified as possible models at national level:

— co-operation with particular networks on particular issues or problems (e.g. that of the DES, NIACE and the FEU on REPLAN);

— 'a generalised commitment to the idea of working in co-operation with other national networks and being open to the discussion of mutual problems' (NACAB, 1982, p.4).

The second instance is, in effect, a plea for 'modelling' good practice at the highest level, and creating a climate - through appropriate funding, structures, policies and behaviour - which will encourage local agencies to collaborate. By implication, there is a plea for the development of common strategies and practices within government and national agencies to enable sound national as well as local collaborative arrangements.

Collaboration as a form of partnership

Collaboration, of course, is not tantamount to partnership in its strictest sense. It is, however, a move in that direction. The question is what degree of partnership is desirable and possible for specific sets of circumstances.

Current practice

In the strict sense of the term, no formal partnerships in the education of adults were found during this project. There was, however, a considerable degree of informal or semi-formal collaboration. This seems to have been brought about primarily by the coincidence of necessity and the presence of far-sighted

individuals who were in a position to influence inter-institutional relationships.

What is in doubt is whether such informal provision alone is sufficient, given the scale and complexity of the education of adults. Most arrangements discussed here operated at best on a year-to-year basis, and could be discontinued at any time if one of the partners was dissatisfied, the specific task had been completed, the funding withdrawn or LEA policy changed.

Potential partners in the education of adults within local authority boundaries

Figure 4 indicates six major groups of potential partners (and indeed, in some cases, potential competitors) in the education of adults within local authority boundaries. It attempts to show the complexity and multilateral nature of their interaction. This interaction does not take place on the basis of complete equality, as some partners have more power and resources than others and each has different and sometimes multiple and changing roles. But any one ignores the other five at its peril, and the MSC (now the Training Agency) (E) and users (F) in particular have been exerting growing pressure on the nature and balance of provision. Users, of course, may be students, employers or sponsors.

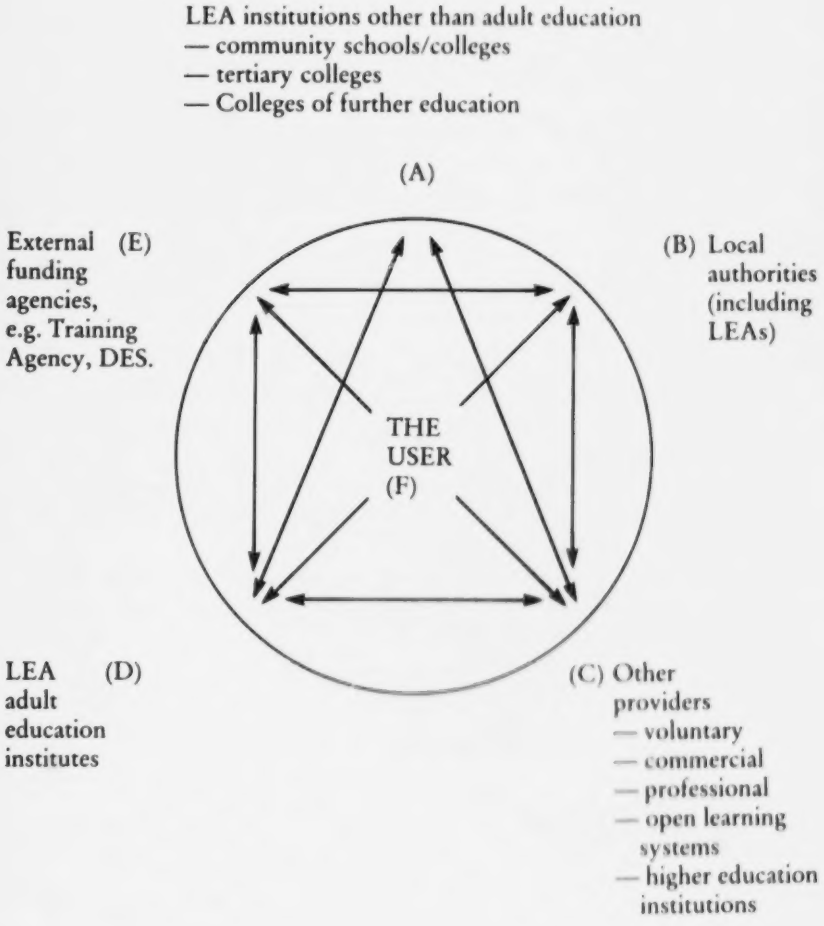
Some determinants of good practice

From this preliminary study, it would be incautious to make sweeping and confident assertions about all the issues involved in partnership. But the project did give rise to an agenda for further discussion and exploration. Seven points bear some elaboration here. They are policy, ethos, financial structure, management structure, curriculum, local circumstances, resources and inducements for partnership.

Policy

None of the four examples mentioned here was able to benefit from a clear policy commitment to partnership from elected members of their further education sub-committee. But county officers in Hampshire and Avon, in particular, expressed a strong commitment to the concept of a more integrated education of adults service, and this gave helpful impetus to various initiatives towards collaboration. The absence of a clear statement from the elected membership was, however, both a sign and cause of continuing confusion. Indeed, it is not altogether clear that, even given such political will within the LEA, the confusion would disappear quickly, as resources might not be available to match these ambitions. However, it was generally felt that a clear policy statement about partnership would help. The prospectuses of all further education colleges in the sample reflect a commitment to the concept of a 'responsive college', and they are now facing the task of developing appropriate structures, staffing and resources to discharge that undertaking.

Figure 4: Major potential 'partners' within local authority boundaries



Ethos

The characteristic culture, beliefs, values and atmosphere generated by organisations is apprehended by both their staff and clients. Smircich (1983) has written about the cultural aspects of organisations, though a great deal of work remains to be done in this field within adult and further education. She stresses the need for, and frequent absence of, a 'shared meaning' within organisations.

Clearly, genuine partners would need to agree on the purpose and nature of their partnership. In the cases cited here, the rudiments of such an agreement were often present, but still required further development.

Financial structure

Many people at different levels insisted that, to clear the way for partnership, financial arrangements for adult education would need to change. Repeatedly, the imperatives of earning Burnham points and regulations about fees and VAT were held to inhibit closer links between adult and further education. The influence of variables such as student hours, the grading of classes, and the decisions of elected members were said often to perpetuate competition and conflict. Weston-super-Mare College of Further Education has experimented by awarding points to the college as a whole, and then farming them out to individual units which can buy in services from another college unit or earn points by selling their services to another unit on a system of internal barter. In time, this could lead to a genuine and total college-wide commitment to the education of adults. Other relevant developments are the subsidies available for provision for unemployed adults, and current talks within the Burnham Committee over pay and conditions of service.

Management structure

At LEA officer level, management structures reflected diverse and separate arrangements for post-16 education. Adult and further education characteristically merge in a single officer's brief, only relatively high up the hierarchy. However, the LEAs' need to set up structures and practices to respond to MSC (now the Training Agency) initiatives seems to have led to the introduction of mechanisms with a potential for more collective approaches. Within individual further education colleges, the appointment of education of adults co-ordinators (e.g. in Weston-super-Mare College of Further Education and Southend College of Technology) with a collegiate brief, answerable direct to senior management, has lent impetus to internal and external collaboration. The qualities of individual staff who operate these structures seem to remain critical factors.

Curriculum

All the further education colleges in the study have developed, and are continuing to develop, a growing curriculum for the education of adults. Often, such curricula require collaboration with other local institutions, as is evident in the chart showing Southend College of Technology's development areas (Figure 1). Curriculum change is obviously an important vehicle for promoting partnership.

Local circumstances

Local circumstances differ, and require different solutions and arrangements. Southend's two major providers have produced a 'curriculum for the town' on a voluntary, informal but regular basis. The reorganised college at Weston-super-Mare has stressed internal collaboration in the education of adults to make up for the absence of suitable external partners in the vicinity. In Kirklees, separately organised adult and further education services came together, in voluntary association, on a one-off basis to attempt to improve access to ESL provision by producing, jointly, an information pamphlet which is multilingual. Southampton, with a large number of providers in its travel-to-work area, has hit upon a joint approach, through the Southampton Education Information Centre for Adults, to educational advice and counselling for adults as a focal point of collaboration.

Resources

Partnership is not a quick or cheap process. Funds must be available for its promotion.

Other inducements for partnership

Potential partners usually require some incentive to collaborate.

One must surely be the bewildering rapidity of change:

> 'Everyone must expect constant change, and
> with it new goals to be achieved and new
> understanding and skills to be mastered.
> The major lesson of continuing education is
> to expect that the unexpected will continue
> to occur.'
>
> (Houle, 1980)

For many providers, the incentive doubtless arises from enlightened self-interest. Others may see it as stemming from principle. Either way, the allocation of resources to fund this time-consuming process is clearly of great help, as the Portsmouth Learning Links project demonstrated.

7. CONCLUSION

The basis of partnership

Considerable organisational barriers exist to discourage partnerships. Hence the notion of 'contract' and an understanding of factors that inhibit or encourage partnerships are important for potential partners.

The material considered in this report indicates a number of positive issues which practitioners, managers and policy-makers must consider in relation to the rationale and implementation of partnership. These issues arise from the need to recognise the distinctive strengths - and limitations - of different kinds of organisations. At the heart of the discussion are the complex and growing needs of contemporary adult students, and strategies that would best enable these to be identified and met, as well as the anxiety of smaller institutions about the possibility of lost autonomy should a partnership be formed. Where such fears are strong, explicit contracts will need to be formulated. On the basis of the field-work, certain conclusions can be drawn about some of the issues involved in partnership.

Partnership is not yet a reality

Significant attempts at various forms of collaboration are described in the four case studies. In all instances, however, partnership, an ideal goal, has not been fully achieved. Even in cases where adult education provision has been fully integrated in theory, adult education staff may often feel peripheral and marginalised by organisational and cultural practice. More sustained promotional and development work would undoubtedly help, including more open discussion about the rationale and operationalisation of partnership. But the ultimate degree of partnership which is appropriate will vary according to local circumstances. In all probability, partnerships of whatever combination will need to be composed of partners of roughly the same size and power if anything approaching equality is to be achieved.

The rationale for establishing partnership

To establish a solid basis for partnership in the education of adults seems both sensible and reasonable, regardless of political party policy, levels of budget or the fears or inclinations of the organisations involved. In some cases, such as at Weston-super-Mare College of Further Education, the partnership arrangements will be primarily internal as there are few other appropriate organisations or agencies within the immediate catchment area with which to collaborate. In others, such as Southampton, where there is a number of potential collaborators or competitors within the area, the compelling need to

establish a framework for inter-agency collaboration has led to the creation of initiatives such as Southampton Education Information Centre for Adults.

Wherever they fall along the spectrum ranging from independence to partnership, these initiatives have a compelling rationale.

They are felt to be cost effective in terms of pay-off to students because they will reduce or clarify lines of demarcation between providers. In particular, joint ventures are seen as necessary to increase the adult participation rate and reduce the drop-out rate. Aspects of this 'invisible' support activity include advice, guidance, counselling and community-based work.

Managing conflict

There is latent conflict between different parts of the post-16 education sector - between sixth form colleges, schools with sixth forms, further education, adult education, continuing and higher education, whether public or private - because all are competing for what are essentially similar, or at least overlapping, student bodies. In this struggle, it is the user who suffers. Doubtless there will always be inter-agency and inter-sectoral competition, but attempts at partnership will reduce that to more acceptable levels.

If genuine partnership is to be promoted, there would seem to be an important role for national agencies such as NIACE and the FEU jointly to provide a positive model and climate to encourage its growth. Genuine partnerships are unlikely to be enforced; they are more likely to arise from shared concerns at local level.

The case for diversity

In some cases, partnership may mean giving up certain things, such as total autonomy, in order to gain others, such as a more co-ordinated service and more effective use of resources. Each partner will have something positive but different to bring to the arrangement. In a diverse education system, the case for collaborative practices is based upon the assumption that different institutions have different but complementary contributions to make.

Coping with difference

Joint ventures involving different types of organisation create an interaction between different kinds of style, culture and ethos. Normally, this causes difficulties in establishing a common ground and the necessary basis of trust and understanding. Recognition of differences in power base and size is crucial in negotiations preceding partnership, and safeguards may need to be built in to any 'contract' or agreement to protect and reassure organisations which feel threatened or uneasy.

Acknowledging controversy

Education has become a major electoral issue, and discussion of partnership is bound up with the wider debate about the centralisation or localisation of control over education services. Hence, while the immediate concern is to address the needs of local users, national and county policies will have an important influence on the outcome of partnership negotiations.

People or structures?

Existing structures often do not help partnership, and may need to be revised or modified. But change in organisational structures alone does not necessarily improve the chances of collaboration. The presence in strategic posts of capable staff committed to joint ventures is also essential, especially in senior appointments.

External and internal partnerships

It may be easier in some cases to develop partnerships between separate institutions of different kinds than between separate institutions of the same kind, or between separate units of a single, large bureaucratic structure. However, this hunch would need to be tested on a more extensive and systematic basis before it could be asserted with any degree of confidence.

The curriculum and change

As the experience of the Southend case study suggests, curriculum-led change appears to be one promising approach to developing partnerships. It is less immediately threatening than organisational change (although it may eventually lead to that) and holds out the possibility of different institutions learning how to develop a partnership through shared curriculum projects.

Ambivalence towards partnership

A considerable amount of hostility or ambivalence towards the idea of partnership was evident during the field-work.

Some times this was latent, other times it was expressed. In some cases partnership was felt to be inappropriate and therefore to be resisted; in others it was a desirable ideal, but subordinate to the need to cope with more pressing everyday crises and the desire to survive and protect one's present role and sphere of influence. Until this hidden agenda is openly acknowledged and confronted, negotiations and mechanisms set up to promote partnership are unlikely to achieve meaningful results.

Resources

Creating a climate conducive to partnership is a time-consuming and resource-dependent business. Many meetings are involved, money has to be spent on

travel and support services, and often materials such as information booklets and displays must be produced. Above all, different agencies need to spend time and money learning how best to work together. Adequate funds must therefore be set aside for this purpose.

Potential 'triggers' of collaboration

Two recent developments in particular may have rich potential for promoting collaboration. These are WRNAFE development plans and the introduction of GCSE.

WRNAFE development plans

The WRNAFE development plan, which colleges are required to submit to the MSC (now the Training Agency), could afford the colleges an opportunity for reviewing curricular or organisational coherence on all matters relevant to the education of adults.

GCSE

A rare and unrepeatable chance to establish inter-agency collaboration is presented by the introduction of GCSE. All providers of education for adults can use this opportunity to learn to work together more closely on a specific matter which concerns them all directly.

Summary

Reasons for closer collaboration include the emergence of services such as REPLAN, advice and guidance, and the growing and increasingly complex needs of adult users of educational services. The experience of this project suggests that five sets of factors are particularly important if partnership is to have any chance of succeeding:

— a shared perception of a solvable problem;

— incentive to work together (including funds and acknowledgement in staff appraisal procedures);

— committed individuals in key posts at all levels;

— appropriate climate and structures;

— a clear understanding of the relationship or 'contract' that is being established between the potential partners.

If these basic ingredients are available, different collaborative arrangements can be developed more easily in forms appropriate to specific local circumstances.

8. GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR PARTNERSHIP

The need for general principles

Since the major concern of this project was to suggest a rationale for partnership in continuing education, derived from available theory and experience, it was decided to indicate a number of general principles which should be taken into account when attempting to devise appropriate partnership arrangements for a variety of local circumstances, rather than try to make specific recommendations. A checklist of ten considerations is given below.

Support for partnership

In addition to influential national, regional and local authority agencies setting a conducive climate by developing appropriate policies and practices, local institutions which are interested in exploring partnership possibilities should receive every practical encouragement to do so. The process by which these might be brought about should be regarded as a central issue and, where necessary, neutral facilitators should be available as a resource.

Further study

To follow up this preliminary study, a more detailed investigation should be made to test certain hypotheses, to identify other partnership models, and to examine in more depth specific factors that inhibit partnership. This study should include national structures and policies, implemented by institutions such as the DES, NIACE and the FEU.

Further discussion

Given that institutions often need to learn how best to collaborate, a series of seminars, workshops and 'learning about partnership' projects should be promoted to enable institutions at all levels to develop their own understanding of the issues that particularly affect them, and to explore ways in which they might best collaborate.

Placing students at the centre

Since a basic rationale for partnership in the education of adults is to provide a service that is responsive to students' needs, every effort should be made to involve students and potential students in consultations about how that service is delivered.

Relationships with other providers

All potential partners, including non-traditional agents such as the Training

Agency, should be involved where appropriate in local collaboration (see Figure 2).

Joint training and funding

To break down inter-institutional barriers and encourage complementary models of provision, inter-agency projects, such as 'A New Way' in Hampshire, should be encouraged and resourced to enable joint training and funding to become more common.

The principle of disinterest

On consortia which involve the pooling of resources for a common educational purpose, a tradition of neutrality should be fostered to allay fears of empire building by any member institution.

Staff incentives

Meetings in pursuit of partnership should be recognised officially for the purposes of staff development and promotion prospects, and funded accordingly.

WRNAFE development plans

WRNAFE development plans should look wider than basic WRNAFE issues to enable comprehensive provision for the education of adults. This should not be taken to imply support for the further expansion of the Training Agency's role into further education.

GCSE as a springboard

The introduction of GCSE syllabuses should be seized as a rare and fleeting opportunity for all concerned providers to work together on an urgent common problem.

Conclusion

Partnership in continuing education is an important issue that could well be overlooked because of conflicting pressures in post-16 education. This report has examined the case for partnership in general, and the principles which should inform any collaborative arrangements. It recognises that no single model can provide a panacea. Only the intelligent application of general principles to specific local circumstances will produce appropriate practices. The experience of this project suggests strongly that partnership and collaboration should be high on the agenda of all post-16 education establishments, but that they are difficult to promote without a greater general awareness of the issues involved. It is hoped that this report will contribute to such an understanding, and to the acceptance of an agreed set of principles.

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